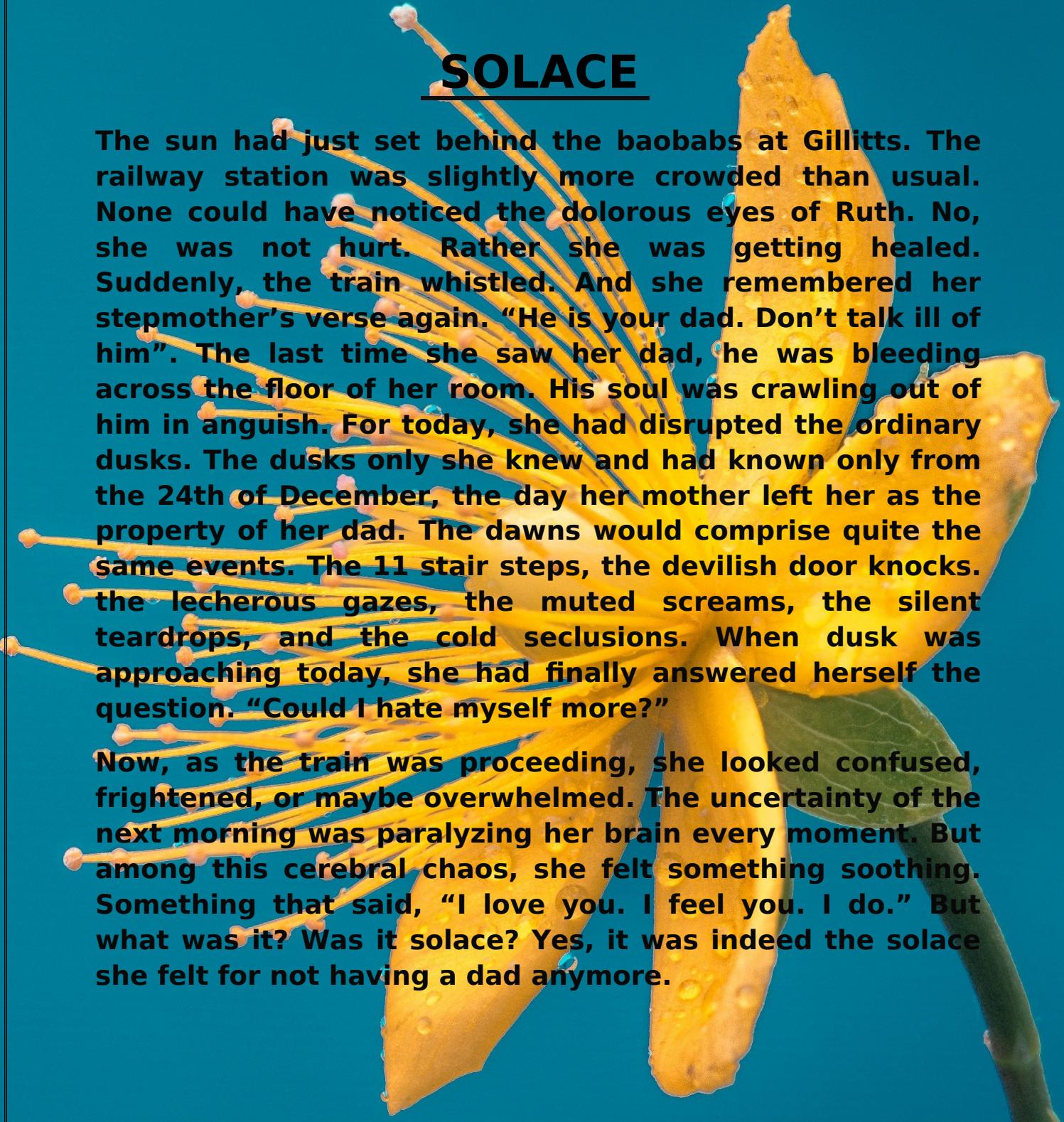


## SOLACE



The sun had just set behind the baobabs at Gillitts. The railway station was slightly more crowded than usual. None could have noticed the dolorous eyes of Ruth. No, she was not hurt. Rather she was getting healed. Suddenly, the train whistled. And she remembered her stepmother's verse again. "He is your dad. Don't talk ill of him". The last time she saw her dad, he was bleeding across the floor of her room. His soul was crawling out of him in anguish. For today, she had disrupted the ordinary dusks. The dusks only she knew and had known only from the 24th of December, the day her mother left her as the property of her dad. The dawns would comprise quite the same events. The 11 stair steps, the devilish door knocks, the lecherous gazes, the muted screams, the silent teardrops, and the cold seclusions. When dusk was approaching today, she had finally answered herself the question. "Could I hate myself more?"

Now, as the train was proceeding, she looked confused, frightened, or maybe overwhelmed. The uncertainty of the next morning was paralyzing her brain every moment. But among this cerebral chaos, she felt something soothing. Something that said, "I love you. I feel you. I do." But what was it? Was it solace? Yes, it was indeed the solace she felt for not having a dad anymore.